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ABSTRACT

In response to uncertainty surrounding the future of the student affairs industry, this paper explores management and organization literature in education and business to elucidate the condition of higher education as a mature industry. The first section, "Higher Education as a Mature Industry," presents characteristics of the life cycle stages of higher education, from birth to institution to maturity (its current state). The second section, "Change and Transformation in Higher Education," examines means of transforming and rejuvenating the student affairs industry. Thinking differently by embracing new combinations of long-standing ideas and empowering staff are suggested. The third section, "The Student Affairs Role in Transformation," looks at how student affairs can transform itself in such a way that it changes higher education. Questions addressed in this section are: (1) What should student affairs look like in the mature industry of higher education? (2) In what ways will student affairs need to apply more practiced means of management? and (3) How can the public trust be regained? Contains 44 references. (RB)

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SESSION TWO: HEARING THE VOICES AROUND US

STUDENT AFFAIRS 2000:

COMING OF AGE IN A MATURE INDUSTRY

February, 16, 1996

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Abstract

This paper describes student affairs as part of the mature industry of higher education. Possibilities for student affairs over the next twenty-five years are explored as they are challenged by budget decreases, limited staff resources, and loss of public confidence. The image offered is a student affairs field intrinsically involved in the rejuvenation and transformation of higher education.

Introduction

Arthur Chickering (1995) alarmed conference participants at the University of Vermont in the summer 1995 by stating that within 20 years student affairs would not exist. Reeling from that possibility, the author of this paper was left with the question, "what will the role of student affairs be after the year 2000?" That same summer, Arthur Levine (1995) characterized higher education as a "mature" industry. Levine stated that the public views mature industries differently than growth industries. The former are under closer scrutiny, their very existence questioned; their worth to society is the basis for speculation; less leeway is given for mistakes; poor decisions are no longer attributed to inexperience.

This paper explores management and organization literature in education and business to elucidate the condition of higher education as a mature industry. Student affairs as a sub-set of this mature higher education industry is also discussed. Questions which serve as a basis for discussion in this paper are "what should student affairs look like within the mature industry of higher education? In what ways will we need to apply more practiced means of management? How can we re-gain the public trust?"

As relative latecomers in 350-year-old American higher education (Rudolph, 1962/1990), the student affairs sub-industry appears youthful compared to higher education's medieval structure. Regalia dates back to England's Oxford University in the 1200s; American higher education originated with the founding of Harvard College in 1636; academic department structures arose from the 1940s post-World War II German research model (Brubacher, 1990; Levine, D. 1986; Mount Holyoke College, 1990; Rudolph, 1962/1990). As Harvard president Lowell wrote in 1934,

> universities have outlived every form of government, every change of tradition, of law, and scientific thought...Of his [sic] creations none has more endured the devouring march of time (Rudolph, p. 27).

Despite the sentiment of longevity and stability embedded in Lowell's words and regardless of attitudes emanating from the 60-year-old origins of student affairs, both higher education and student affairs must rejuvenate and transform if we are to remain viable.

Higher Education as a Mature Industry

The higher education literature rarely speaks of the profession and its institutions maturing to the point of obsolescence and death. Not wanting to discuss the unthinkable, higher education administrators overlook business literature explaining that institutions have a life cycle from birth to death, markets have their ups and downs, and particular organizations remain viable while others fail.

Life Cycle Model of Organizations and Industries

The following information, gathered from business literature, examines the life cycle model of organizations and industries and applies that model to higher education. Of particular interest are the ways to transform mature organizations to more dynamic, viable forms. The structure and processes of organizations (e.g., individual college or university) as well as those of industries (e.g., higher education) are placed in the context of the life cycle model. A historical context of higher education is provided as a full understanding of the growth and development of this industry.

Birth and Early Development Stage. New organizations struggle to find their identity,

develop ways of operating, and establish themselves in their environment. Faulty decision making, uneven responses to environmental demands, uncertainty resulting from "newness," freedom among institutional membership, and a disorganized structure typify the birth of organizations (Miles & Randolph, 1980). New organizations and the industries they form develop a distinct culture; create norms and values; and initiate procedures (Kimberly, 1980). Leadership is a primary driving force in an organization throughout this early development stage.

Early leaders are essential during the birth of an organization (Kimberly, 1980). Early heroes and heroines of higher education include Mary Lyon, Charles Eliot, and David Starr Jordan who, with their contemporaries and followers, shaped the values and beliefs of both their institutions and the higher education industry (Brubacher, 1990; Goodsell, 1931; Horowitz, 1984; Rudolph, 1962/1990).

During its early development, higher education struggled with beliefs about access (i.e., is higher education a privilege or a right?), academic freedom (i.e., who should possess this license?), and service (i.e., how should higher education serve society?). From a lively and often contentious debate, the current belief structure of higher education emerged. This belief system, still evolving, is characterized by "cultivation of the intellect, objectivity based on facts and logical argument, methods of persuasion rather than power, and wide latitude for freedom of the individual" (Brubacher, 1990, p. 9).

Institutionalization Stage. As institutions and industries mature they "remove as much uncertainty as possible from organizational life" (Kimberly, 1980, p. 40 - 41). Organizations and industries convert from personal-oriented structures where charisma emanates from individuals to impersonal ones where authority is located in the bureaucracy. The collective

action of many voices offering input shifts to instrumental methods where communication is achieved by standard operating procedures (Kimberly). After discovering what works, members formalize these into procedures and a structure. This routinization does not automatically imply bureaucracy although that form is most common in higher education.

Higher education is uniquely characterized by its dual structure of bureaucracy and collegium (Austin & Gamson, 1983; Baldridge, Curtis, Ecker, & Riley, 1980; Birnbaum, 1991). The administration resembles a bureaucracy complete with chains of command, hierarchy, top-down decision making, and an accepted, though rarely achieved, information flow. The faculty adhere to a collegial structure characterized by consensus decision making, a "first among equals" approach to authority, minimal hierarchical structure, autonomy, and status judged on expertise, not position.

Throughout institutionalization, organizations and industries negotiate new roles in unfamiliar surroundings; roles and performance criteria upon which excellence is judged are unclear (Kimberly). In its institutionalization stage, new roles in higher education were filled by faculty members. Until World War II, they performed roles (e.g., disciplinarian) currently occupied by student affairs educators. The faculty and administrator roles became more distinct from one another as higher education and student affairs developed as a profession and field, respectively.

Role delineation by student affairs educators continues today even though higher education has evolved past the institutionalization stage. If student affairs is to flourish in concert with the higher education industry, we can no longer engage in role confusion and negotiation with other members (e.g., faculty, students, other administrators). The mature higher education industry,

wrestling with the political realities of a doubting public, cannot afford members who continue to negotiate their role as if the industry were new.

If roles are over-routinized (a significant danger in bureaucracies), freedom to learn is dampened. In such organizations, learning can become monopolized by the upper administration (Miles & Randolph, 1980). The resources, such as information and power, to transform the organization and remain viable are stockpiled at a level where few in the organization have access. Instead of limiting learning, organizational leadership can create organizational freedom or "slack" so that the membership has the opportunity to learn (Miles & Randolph). Without this freedom, narrow routinized ways are replaced with less bureaucratic approaches only when adverse negative feedback is applied.

Maturity Stage. Mature organizations and industries have undergone the routinization of institutionalization. In their well-formed structure, members have less freedom and voice in organizational change which is generally slow. The structure has less room for quick, innovative modifications. The labor force is usually specialized by function (e.g., career development, financial aid) and relatively inflexible across functions. These functions are self-perpetuating; once part of the organization, they are rarely abandoned or shed. There is complacency in mature industries from an often mistaken assurance that their market niche (e.g., student admissions) is secure. Work, including service, is performed at the convenience of the organization, not the customer. The attitude assumed is that business is readily available and deserves little exceptional attention to breed customer loyalty (Baden-Fuller & Stopford, 1994; Beatty & Ulrich, 1991; Doeringer, 1987)

Mature organizations can transition past being dynamic into decline. In this type of

organization the "managers believe they are imprisoned by their environments and are unable to succeed" (Baden-Fuller & Stopford, 1994, p. 1). Mature organizations, with their potentially fossilized structures, must actively work to remain dynamic. This entails astute environmental analysis and an adaptable belief system.

The mature organization risks maladaptation when purposes formed in the early development and institutionalization stages persist in an environment different from those early days (Miles & Randolph, 1980). To remain viable higher education and the sub-industry of student affairs must be as "dynamic and plastic" as the surrounding environment and social order (Brubacher, 1990, p. 17). If static in the face of current political and external demands, higher education and student affairs grows moribund, unable to meet the needs of the changing context. External factors challenging higher education to transform itself include the increasing diversity among students, loss of public confidence, public intolerance for exorbitant tuition, and decreased financial support from state and federal sources (Bok, 1992; DeLoughry, 1995; Justiz, Wilson, & Bjork, 1994; Lovett, 1995; Wingspread Group on Higher Education, 1993). Internal factors pressuring transformation include expanded means of delivering education: weekend colleges, distance education, satellite campuses, and electronic learning. Despite the diversity of higher education institutions and approaches to learning, many operate as though they are peopled with students from a bygone era: white, male, recent high school graduates, who are full-time, live on-campus, and attend four-year institutions (Wingspread Group).

> A challenge to organizations...is that choices made early...serve both to shape their enduring character and to constrain the range of options available to them in later stages of organizational life (Miles & Randolph, 1980, p. 45).

The medieval structure of higher education: continuation of tenure which produces too stable a workforce; and tendency to fill upper administrative posts with academic personnel are innovations which may have served higher education well in its early structure. But they may be obsolete in an organization striving for dynamism and viability. Student affairs educators also cling to vestiges of the field's birth and early development. Emphasis on one-to-one advising, predominance of the counseling model, persistence of in loco parentis, and race- and gender-exclusive student development theories may have been useful when the field was young but work less well in an industry which has matured beyond these early innovations. The mature industry of higher education, including student affairs, must undergo transformation to more dynamic, responsive forms by shedding ways of operating which are no longer adequate.

Change and Transformation in Higher Education

Higher education is notorious for its slow rate of change. This situation, frustrating to faculty, administrators, and students alike, reflects the archaic, medieval vestiges inherent in the higher education structure. Despite this long-standing structural problem, there is evidence that transformations occurred in the past and are possible in the present and future.

Thinking Differently

For an organization to transform and rejuvenate, its membership must learn to "act and think differently" by embracing new combinations of long-standing ideas. In business, these re-visited combinations might include variety and efficiency, quality and productivity, speed and flexibility (Baden-Fuller & Stopford, 1994, p. 3). In higher education, transformation means thinking differently about long-standing, seemingly incompatible dualisms: excellence or accessibility, learning or doing, curricular inclusiveness or pedagogical coherence, and high

quality or fiscal prudence (Brubacher, 1990; Dewey, 1938; Weick, 1983).

In a rejuvenated, transformed industry, "and" substituted for "or" can transform these either/or dualisms into paradoxes. Higher education administrators can envision new possibilities by considering these dualisms as paradoxes needing both sides to exist. The two concepts co-exist and add to one another rather than compete with and detract from one other. Reconceiving these dualisms as paradoxes serves to revitalize higher education by combining long-standing challenges in different ways. The alternative, competing dualisms where one half of the pair needs to be eliminated, closes down innovation and possible transformation. The dualisms become the paradoxical excellence and accessibility, high quality and fiscal prudence, curricular inclusiveness and pedagogical coherence.

As paradoxes rather than dualisms, these concepts need not impose excessive complexity on the higher education environment such that student affairs educators fail to see different combinations resulting in strategic innovations. Thinking differently to envision innovations assists the organization and industry to correct perceptions, institute new kinds of behavior, and correct defective strategy (Baden-Fuller & Stopford, 1994).

Empowering Staff

An essential step in this transformation and rejuvenation is empowering staff to consider the organization, not as an inevitable, unchanging bureaucracy, but as a viable, dynamic organization (Beatty & Ulrich, 1991). Transformation is not the sole responsibility of top managers but depends on all members performing differently inside the business. Baden-Fuller and Stopford (1994) noted that this change in practice can be

> radical and incremental...radical in the sense that beliefs were altered, structure

> torn down, skills modified, and new technology introduced...incremental in the sense that building new competencies, new capabilities, and new resources was not the work of a moment, but was deeply embedded (p. 14)

in the organization or industry.

Transformation theorists (Baden-Fuller & Stopford, 1994; Doeringer, 1987; Kimberly, 1980) offer advice to those seeking institutional rejuvenation: start modestly, build staff and resource capacities, emphasize and encourage entrepreneurial skills, challenge and resolve dilemmas, replace old technologies with newer ones, build flexibility into job assignments and work rules, reduce bureaucracy, and achieve sustained renewal. These authors caution that there are no quick fixes for an organization or industry which has lost its dynamism. Only commitment to the long haul will effect real and lasting transformation.

As discussed above, consideration of changes in the external context is an essential but incomplete step in organizational transformation. Rather than assuming a defensive, reactive posture about external factors, administrators must enact and shape change from inside the organization. "During...transformations [from one stage to another]...particular individuals can exert unusually large amounts of influence over organizational outcomes" (Kimberly, 1980, p. 42). Student affairs educators have an essential role to play in the transformation of their college or university as well as of the higher education industry in general.

The Student Affairs Role in Transformation

Student affairs, always the outsider in academic life, has the flexibility, innovativeness, and creativity to transform itself. As such, the transformation of student affairs can be a model for the rejuvenation of higher education. The question is how can the student affairs field

transform itself in such a way that it changes higher education? Promise for this approach emanates from the business literature indicating that "successful transformations share a common feature: rejuvenation was generated from within, using limited outside resources" (Baden-Fuller & Stopford, 1994, p. 2). Student affairs, experienced at operating with limited resources, can act as an agent for organization and industry transformation.

The following addresses the questions posed at the beginning of this paper. These questions frame student affairs responses to the internal and external challenges to higher education in the next twenty five years. The responses paint a picture of a field performing as a full partner in the transformation of higher education.

What Should Student Affairs Look Like in the Mature Industry of Higher Education?

Transformation requires that student affairs educators heed Arthur Chickering's predicted demise of student affairs. His Doomsday prophesy warns us that we have not attended to the prominent challenges of the field. These challenges take their toll in some unusual and unique ways.

1. Social justice and fairness should replace patriarchy and partisanship.

Social justice is an enduring value within higher education. Despite its elitist beginnings, higher education strives to incorporate the ideals of equity, egalitarianism, and justice into its belief structure. Brubacher explained that social justice is so important to higher education that "were it to conflict with the pursuit of intellectual excellence, the latter should not automatically prevail" (1990, p. 20).

The liberation theorists (hooks, 1994a; 1994b; Purpel, 1989; Shapiro & Purpel, 1993; Shor, 1992) can assist student affairs educators to "take another look, to contest, to interrogate,

and in some cases to recover and redeem" (hooks, 1994a, p. 5). The liberation theorists contend that education is a political task; neutrality must be replaced with a commitment to eliminate oppression. "Not rocking the boat" is replaced with a critical, questioning style; comfort supplanted with freedom.

2. Students, administrators, and faculty should emphasize empowerment.

A central perspective in organizational transformation as well as liberation theory is empowerment. Student affairs educators empower others not by "doing for" students, but by creating the circumstances to "do with" them. Treated as equal subjects with a right to the education in which they are engaged, students are more than depositories of knowledge. Instead, they are treated as acting, self-aware, thinking persons (Freire, 1970).

Student affairs educators can use liberation theory to view our field more critically and decisively. Long-standing campus ideologies such as an elitist basis for admissions, "color blind" practices for administrative hiring, and discipline policies and procedures are beliefs and practices ripe for transformation.

3. Cooperative and collaborative forms of organizational life should be adopted.

The dehumanizing effects of bureaucracy can be countered when administrators adopt cooperative and collaborative means. In a cooperative structure, the nature and distribution of knowledge are examined.

> who should possess this organizational knowledge? Under what conditions would it be beneficial for this knowledge to be widely distributed within the membership of an organization? (Miles & Randolph, 1980, p. 76).

Empowerment in student affairs warrants a wide distribution of knowledge as well as provision

of the resources necessary for all to perform well. Politics should be kept at a minimum; empowerment of all maximized. Accepted patterns of administrative behavior (e.g., top down decision making, institutionalized roles without regard for the person) should no longer be tenable in a system whose mission embodies empowerment and social justice.

In What Ways Will Student Affairs Need to Apply More Practiced Means of Management?

A reality facing student affairs educators as we reshape our perspective and respond to a changed environment is that

> Resistance can arise from personal unwillingness to face the uncomfortable fact that all one's professional experience might count for little in the future (Baden-Fuller & Stopford, 1994, p. 5).

Relearning how to manage, risking a potential loss of status, and reshaping tried and true adages such as "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" mean loss, and perhaps pain.

Student affairs needs to fully embrace their educational role with expert management skills. This adroit management is embedded within the context of student development (American College Personnel Association, 1993; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Magolda, 1992; McEwen, Roper, Bryant, & Langa, 1990), social justice (Brubacher, 1990; hooks 1994a; 1994b), and critical thinking (Newman, 1959). Anything less than high quality administration within a substantial educational context betrays the higher education mission.

1. Increase student affairs educators' management expertise.

As a field with origins in the helping professions (e.g., counseling, human development), student affairs has justifiably downplayed its administrative role. Unfortunately, the mature industry of higher education no longer contains the "slack" necessary to accommodate less than

expert management. A mature higher education industry requires that student affairs adopt a professional stance concerning management and administration. The position proposed is that we view administration as a means to education, not a necessary evil which distracts us from our work with students. Student development and administration can be combined in ways not previously imagined.

2. New professionals must be fully educated in theory and practice.

The sixty years of student affairs history has resulted in a developing theory base and informed means of practice. Student affairs is no longer a field bereft of history, theory, or best practices. The still-developing knowledge base contains numerous insights about working with students as well as optimal means to encourage development. Without formal education and training, the new professional is left to his or her devices to learn the requisite theory, history, and skills while "on the job." This situation places undergraduate students at risk of untrained and unethical practice.

3. Assume that student affairs is essential to the higher education mission.

Student affairs educators continue to struggle with a faulty perception of second class citizenship and lowered status compared to faculty (Manning, in press). In an effort to prove our equality and worth, student affairs educators undertake research, launch campaigns to increase awareness of the field, and justify the value of student affairs through various means. The approach suggested in this paper is to abandon the comparative and competitive approach between faculty and student affairs educators. Instead,

> student affairs educators consider their role as essential, not because of their relative importance to the academic mission, but because their purposes and

mission are intrinsically essential to the mission of higher education (Manning). Faculty and student affairs educators both fulfill essential educational roles within higher education. They perform their functions within cultures which co-exist yet operate separately on college campuses. While we occupy different roles and ascribe to different cultures it is possible for both groups to be intimately bound to each other's purposes in a complementary fashion. This cooperative rather than competitive posture is one for which student affairs educators can strive.

4. Student affairs should come to peace about its mission and purposes.

Since its inception, the student affairs field has struggled to determine a clear purpose as well as craft a direct link to the education profession. The student affairs field risks elimination if we cannot express a clearly stated, educational purpose explicitly related to the mission and purposes of higher education. Without a clear link to the higher education industry, decision makers cannot justify educational dollars for services unrelated to the industry's mission. Those administrators seeking to cut budgets can easily construct a minimalist approach to student services based on the assumption that students as adults can acquire services from off-campus sources.

5. Student affairs educators should reconcile their discomfort with multiple roles.

Student affairs educators filled many roles as the field and higher education industry grew. Counselor, parent, disciplinarian, and administrator, filled at one time or another, created a situation of indispensability and flexibility as the industry experienced its growing pains. Student affairs in the mature industry of higher education must adapt to these multiple roles with comfort and ease. The paradoxical concepts at play here are comfort and ambiguity.

Downsizing and strategic planning literature is filled with advice about the need for flexible, multiple roles as a means to revitalize an industry. Flexibility implies complexity, a hallmark of higher education (Brubacher, 1990; Cohen & March, 1986) and business in today's environment (Peters, 1988).

How Can We Regain the Public's Trust?

Since its inception, higher education's elitist approach has conflicted with the democratic perspective embodied in American society. Often criticized as "anti-intellectual," the public is understandably skeptical about higher education's emphasis on the ethereal (e.g., life of the mind) rather than practical (e.g., employment training). Higher education separates itself from daily life; it adopts privileges (e.g., academic freedom) not available to other professions. Higher education has been generously supported by the public in the past. Recent cuts indicate that continued support will not continue without some resolution of these longstanding disagreements.

1. Craft strategic and opportunistic actions to public scrutiny.

Exponential tuition increases, political correctness, and increased demand for service combine to shatter public confidence in higher education. Since higher education has never been fully secure in its status as an essential American establishment, these recent challenges work to erode an already precarious position. A student affairs field poised to transform itself to a more advantageous position with the public must reason through a response to the issues presented by higher education stakeholders.

For example, many student affairs educators assumed that the Conservatives' response (e.g., political correctness criticism) to diversity efforts will transpire with minimal long-term

consequences. Instead, higher education's image in the public eye is severely eroded when social justice efforts are belittled and caricatured. Similarly, few in higher education have crafted a public response which links the out-of-proportion tuition increases of the 1980s with the equally out-of-proportion decreases in Federal funding during the Reagan years. Higher education is no longer immune from attacks which may have little basis in fact. Transformation of the industry requires a concomitant increase in public trust.

2. Enrich the student affairs mission concerning community, spirituality, and meaningfulness.

The 1990s has seen a resurgence of spirituality and community among students. Books finding their way to campus include Parker Palmer's (1993) To know as we are known and Thomas Moore's companion books, Soulmates (1994) and Care of the soul (1992). Students, despite their classification as a hedonistic and uncaring "Generation X" (Howe & Strauss, 1993), are demonstrating a hunger to link their individual lives to considerations greater than themselves. For some students this longing is expressed in institutional loyalty; for others, in a return to the synagogues, churches, and houses of worship their parents abandoned.

Perhaps still stinging from the effects of student activism of the 1960s and the "me generation" of the 1970s, student affairs educators seem reluctant to join these issues of the heart and soul. bell hooks' (1994a; 1994b) writings about justice, Nel Noddings' (1984) discussion about hope and care, Parker Palmer's (1993) and Benjamin Barber's (1992) treatises on community, and Thomas Sergiovanni's (1992) study of moral leadership can assist us to incorporate community and spirituality into the student affairs perspective.

3. Construct a well-managed solution to the service-on-demand environment.

Technology, high tuition, and elevated student expectations urge college and university administrators to produce service-on-demand. Described in the business literature as "customer value," dynamic, viable organizations can transform themselves by increasing service to their customers. While many in student affairs are offended by the "customer" analogy, students view colleges and universities through their perspective as active and instantaneous consumers. This situation is a reality that student affairs must face if we are to maintain our position as an important educational force in American Higher Education. While not a panacea, technology can be more skillfully used by student affairs educators to increase value.

Conclusion

While the above inventory of issues facing higher education and student affairs is incomplete, the list can assist us to imagine areas ripe for transformation and rejuvenation. Student affairs promises to be profoundly challenged in the next twenty years as higher education undergoes an adjustment to its familiar ways of operating. A key to a successful transformation of both the student affairs field and the higher education industry will depend on the practiced tenacity of student affairs educators.

Organizational transformation is at the heart of the resurgence of the higher education industry. The student affairs field, peopled with innovators and creative personnel, has the capacity to serve as a primary source of the transformation so critically needed within higher education.

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